Where did the time go?

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/28978893.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Hannibal (TV), Hannibal Lecter Series - All Media Types, Prodigal Son (TV 2019)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Malcolm Bright, Hannibal Lecter, Alana Bloom, Jack Crawford, Abigail Hobbs
Additional Tags:	Crossovers & Fandom Fusions, Friendship, Fluff and Angst, Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Night Terrors, Misunderstandings, Minor Alana Bloom/Will Graham, Endgame Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Sleepwalking Will Graham
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Time waits for no-one
Stats:	Published: 2021-01-25 Completed: 2021-02-04 Words: 12,901 Chapters: 5/5

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by Fictionfuelled

Summary

In which Will's old friend Malcolm comes to visit.
Starts midway through episode 1 (season 1) of Prodigal Son and after episode 2 (season 1) of Hannibal. Takes place mostly in Hannibal canon.

Notes

This is a very self-indulgent Hannibal/Prodigal Son crossover inspired by a prompt from Ostler. It starts after Malcolm left the FBI and after episode 2 of Hannibal and is set in 2019 despite being set in season 1 of Hannibal. So the characters are all their canon s1 ages, it is just 2019 instead of 2013. I hope you enjoy, and if you have any questions feel free to ask in the comments!

Chapter 1

It had been easy to find Will. It always had been, for Malcolm. Will hid from the world, but not from him, never him. Malcolm was his best friend after all. His only friend, as far as Malcolm knew.

News (or rather: gossip) at Quantico had been that, after a stint as a cop back in New Orleans, Will had eventually been hired as a teacher for agents in training. It had been easy enough to follow the trail from there. Which was why, after paying his cab driver handsomely, Malcolm stepped out of the car to face Will's home in rural Wolf Trap, Virginia. He had heard barking as soon as the cab had approached the driveway and cracked a grin. One thing he could always rely on from Will was a fondness for animals. People not so much.

As he strode up to the front door, Malcolm inspected the exterior of the house. It was smaller than what Malcolm was used to and he was sure Will liked it that way. He peeked in through the large windows as he stepped up onto the porch, ignoring the flurry of movement, taking in several chairs and what looked like a king sized bed in the living room. Malcolm shook his head, his grin taking over even more of his face. He had forgotten that Will was almost as paranoid as he was.

Although Malcolm had a good idea of where Will kept his spare keys, he decided not to use any of them. Where would be the fun in that? Instead Malcolm pulled out one of his many lockpicks and had a go at the door. It was only a matter of seconds before the door clicked open and Malcolm was rushed by Will's dogs. He laughed as they excitedly ran rings around him and made sure to hurry them back into the house before any of them got any big ideas about escaping. Will would kill him if any of his dogs went missing.

The inside of the house looked cosy, if a little sparsely and unevenly decorated. It was easy to tell what had come with the house and what Will had chosen himself (mostly the books, a well-loved and diverse bunch, as well as a lot of dog ephemera ranging from photos and paintings to little figurines). The building had the feeling of a home, of reprieve and it warmed Malcolm's heart. He knew Eloise Graham's luxurious manor house back in New York was never a place of comfort for Will, that it only ever reminded him of how much he missed his father. Malcolm could still remember the way Will's voice had cracked and creaked the one time they had braved the conversation topic of their fathers. It had been the day before they applied for the FBI together.

Malcolm immediately shut down that line of thought and followed the canines to where all of them slumped in front of the large fireplace. All except one, a small yappy thing continued to run back and forth between Malcolm and his bed before flopping onto his back. Malcolm huffed a laugh; he could take a hint. After giving the dog (whose name tag read Buster) belly rubs, Malcolm stretched his legs and fished out his phone from his pocket. He still remembered Will's number off by heart, even though they hadn't held contact for several years (ten years to be precise, ten long years). He had given him that phone after all. It only took two rings for Will to pick up. "Malcolm?" His voice was gruff and rushed but instantly

recognisable. Malcolm heard movement and distant muttering and then the unmistakable click of a door and the background noise cut off abruptly.

“Yes Will?” Malcolm teased.

“It’s actually you? I thought – it doesn’t matter what I thought. Why are you calling?”

“Straight to the point, just like always. Have you still got more classes today?” Malcolm knew he didn’t.

“No.” A pause filled with surprisingly jagged breathing. “You didn’t say why you’re calling.”

“You might want to rush home. I’ve heard a rumour that an old friend let himself into your house.” Will huffed an incredulous laugh but Malcolm hung up before he could reply. He let out his own laugh, unable to hold it back any longer. He was going to see Will again; he could barely believe it.

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Malcolm knew it would take Will at least forty minutes to get to his house from Quantico. He ended up taking almost an hour. In that time Malcolm snooped. He found a rifle tucked away in one of the upstairs bedrooms (the one to the left of the stairs), he found the bullets in a safe that only took two tries to crack the code of and he found several knives concealed in a number of hiding spots. Then he looked deeper. He found tidily packaged meals carefully placed at the back of Will’s fridge. When he unwrapped one of them he discovered a note written in a hand far neater than Will’s own detailing instructions for heating up the dish on the stove. He found a hidden compartment in one of Will’s drawers which contained newspaper clippings. They were of mostly society pages. His name popped up less frequently than Ainsley’s and their mother’s. Eloise Graham’s name featured as well. Will’s was conspicuously absent. Under all those clippings was the obituary of Beau Graham. Malcolm stopped snooping after that.

Will Graham’s arrival was announced by a chorus of barking cut through by litanies of “sit, stay, okay” and then even more barking. Malcolm approached the chaos and was charmed to find Will on his knees attempting to stroke all the dogs at once. Will looked up as Malcolm’s reached them and he grinned. It took him a moment to get up with the mass of dogs squirming around him but as soon as he did, he pulled Malcolm into a tight hug. Even though ten years had passed since they had last seen each other, Will felt thinner than before and Malcolm frowned internally. He studied Will as he stepped back and felt Will’s scrutinizing gaze run over him in turn. Will looked tired. The bags under his eyes were heavier even than the ones Malcolm had. His hair was more unkempt than Malcolm had ever seen it before. He had been warm to the touch. Body temperature higher than Malcolm remembered. But then again, memory could play tricks on people. Malcolm knew that far too well. He decided to keep an eye on Will over his stay. Malcolm looked up and met Will’s curious stare. Malcolm had always been the only one Will had been comfortable to meet eyes with. It was nice to see that hadn’t changed.

“Not that I don’t want you here, god knows I’ve missed you, but why are you here?”

Malcolm sighed and rolled his eyes. “Long story.” Will continued to stare unflinchingly. “Okay, okay,” Will’s lips ticked upwards into a tiny smile, “I was fired by the FBI alright?” Will’s lips straightened into a thin line again. “Well technically I resigned, but only because they were about to fire me!”

Malcolm was sure the other man had a lot to say about that given the reason they had drifted apart, but Will didn’t voice it. Instead he shrugged and said: “you’re free to help me cook then.” Malcolm knew his face lit up as he grinned at his long time friend. “Of course! No promises I won’t burn your kitchen down though.”

Will smirked. “I still haven’t forgotten that. Don’t worry. You just have to chop vegetables.”

They ended up cooking a fish Will had caught the week prior. Will said nothing about the mysterious premade meals kept in his fridge so Malcolm didn’t bring them up either. They ate their dinner in companiable silence. Malcolm hadn’t felt so comfortable in years. After eating they made their way over to the soft armchairs Will had in the lounge. Will took a bottle of cheap whiskey out of a cabinet and gestured at Malcolm who nodded with a smile. He was given a glass a minute later and they settled in. Malcolm sat in the chair closest to the piano and nodded at it when Will was seated. “You still play?” he asked.

“You still do ballet?” Will retorted coolly, his smile betraying him.

“Sometimes. But the piano. You play still?”

“Sometimes,” Wills gaze skittered over the floor, looking away from Malcolm for the first time since they’d reunited. Malcolm knew he should drop the conversation but, as almost always, he didn’t.

“Can you play for me? Now?”

Will heaved a deep sigh and closed his eyes. Then he opened them and nodded curtly. Malcolm watched as he made his way to the piano. As his hands hovered over the piano, Malcolm saw them shake. “Copying me now Will?” he joked, in an attempt to lighten the mood. Will didn’t seem to hear him, his brow furrowed in concentration. And then his fingers were on the keys. Malcolm watched him carefully. Taking in the jerky way Will's fingers moved as he played. It certainly didn’t look like how Will used to play, but it still sounded beautiful, if slightly stilted. Will stopped suddenly, his fingers frozen in place. He stumbled away from the piano as if burned and slumped back in his chair, pouring more whiskey into his glass with even shakier hands than before. Malcolm didn’t comment.

The silence was heavier than before but Malcolm still felt comfortable underneath his growing concern for Will. “So…” he started, “I saw the article.”

“Fucking Freddie Lounds,” Will growled, his eyes darkening.

Malcolm nodded in acquiescence. “How are you feeling about it?”

Will snorted. “Just peachy. How are you feeling about getting fired? Sorry – resigning.” Malcolm opened his mouth only for Will to cut him off, “and don’t say fine.”

Malcolm shook his head even though both of them knew that was exactly what he would've said. "It's ridiculous," he surprised himself by blurting out. "They compared me to my father. They basically called me a psychopath."

"But your father isn't even a psychopath," Will stated, he's–"

"A predatory sociopath, I know. That's what I said."

A pause. And then, "you're not like him, you know. You applied to the FBI to help people. I know that because I was there, applying for exactly the same reason."

"I'm sorry," Malcolm said and he meant it.

"What are you sorry for?" Will sounded surprised as he asked.

"I'm sorry I got in and you didn't."

Will sighed again. "Don't be sorry. They were probably right, not that I'd ever say that." The 'to anyone that isn't you' went unspoken between them. "I mean look at me now," Will gestured wildly. "I'm a mess. This is only the second case I've been called in on and I almost killed someone today." Malcolm startled. "He was going to murder a young girl, she's in a coma."

"Abigail Hobbs?"

"How do you–"

"As much as they like to pretend otherwise, news travels fast in Quantico."

"Right." Will shook his head. "Anyway, that wasn't my point. My point is that you don't need to be sorry."

"Oh." Malcolm swallowed down the lump in his throat. "Then, why didn't you ever call or text or do something, anything to stay in contact?" ('You know how much Vijay hurt me. I know you hated him for doing that to me. So why did you do the same thing?' Malcolm thought but refused to say)

Will laughed and it sounded painful. "I don't know. Maybe it's because you felt guilty and when you feel guilty I feel guilty. Or maybe it's because I didn't want to hold you back from your shiny new future. I am tangled up in your… unfavourable past. I didn't want to bring up bad memories for you. I picked up the phone a couple times. The one you gave me. But I could never bring myself to actually use it to call you. And the longer I left it, the worse I felt about not having done it."

Malcolm stared at him. "For such a smart guy, you're really dumb Will."

That shocked a more genuine laugh from his friend, whose smile finally reached his eyes. "So are you, Malcolm."

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“Are you gonna be okay in one of the upstairs bedrooms? I er, I didn’t think – I mean, I have handcuffs?” Will looked nervous. Which made sense. Neither of them ever liked talking about their sleeping habits.

“No need.” Malcolm grinned, “I brought my own restraints. They’ve come up with much higher quality portable ones now since we roomed together, you know. And an upstairs bedroom is fine, thanks.”

Will looked visibly relieved. “Good. Shower’s over there and you can take any of the two upstairs bedrooms. Whichever you prefer.” He nodded to himself and walked back to the kitchen. Malcolm took his stuff upstairs first. He chose the bedroom to the right of the stairs (the one without the gun, probably safer that way). He had only brought a small bag with him, but his restraints were hidden inside and he set them up against the bed, pleased to see it had a good headboard to attach them to. Then he took a quick shower, rushing through it so as not to waste Will’s hot water. He saw Will was still in the kitchen and went over to him. “Er, thanks for having me.”

“It’s okay. I’ve missed you Malcolm. I can’t believe it’s been ten years.”

“Yeah. Well I’m gonna try and catch some sleep now.”

“Good luck,” Will said with a wry smile. “I’ll just let the dogs out one last time and then try and sleep too.”

“Good luck,” Malcolm echoed.

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Malcolm didn’t manage to sleep for a long time. He imagined Will didn’t either. He had felt tired, drained even, after the long day, but as soon as he had strapped himself to the bed he was full of restless energy. When his eyes finally slid closed it felt like he was instantly thrown into his usual night terrors. Except something was different. The fear was the same. The box was the same. But when he opened it, curled up inside was Will, looking just as he had the first time they had met. His lanky limbs and overgrown curls covered his face but Malcolm knew it was him. Just as he was about to try and help him out, the lid of the box slammed shut. Malcolm could hear screaming and banging from inside the box and tried to reach out for it, but it slipped away from just under his fingers as if jerked back by a rope and all Malcolm could hear was Will’s warbling cries for help.

His eyes snapped open.

His teeth were clenched so tightly into the grip of his mouthguard they ached. He relaxed his jaw and spat it out onto the bed.

There was no clock in the room he had chosen but he had left his watch on the bedside table. Malcolm slowly unclasped one of his restraints with a shaky hand and grabbed the watch. He had almost slept for three hours. It wasn’t ideal, but he was far too disturbed by the dream to attempt to go back to sleep. He undid the other restraint and stretched as he got up. Too bad Will didn’t have a yoga mat.

When he got downstairs, Will was sat at the table, his eyes distant. Malcolm walked past him and he didn't even look up. So Malcolm dragged a chair noisily from under the table and sat in it. Will's head shot up and he stared at him intensely. "Malcolm."

"You alright, Will?" Malcolm asked.

"'Course." He didn't look alright. He looked pale and exhausted. Malcolm didn't say anything. Just filed it away to examine at a later date. "Sorry," Will said, standing up quickly. "I should let out the dogs. They haven't been out yet."

"Of course. Want me to go with you?"

"No, no. You can, er, make some coffee. I know how much you love the stuff. My coffee machine isn't as fancy as yours was but it's decent." Malcolm nodded and approached the coffee machine Will had pointed to. It looked simple enough. Malcolm turned to ask Will how to turn it on, but Will was already gone.

Malcolm had just finished pouring out his coffee and was about to pour one out for Will too (they both liked it black, which was good since Malcolm doubted Will had any coffee creamer) when he heard voices. He frowned. He put down the coffees and snuck closer to the porch. That was definitely two voices. One clearly Will's and the other a woman's voice – soft but with an edge of tension to it. He heard her say "let's have a cup of coffee."

Malcolm stepped out onto the porch, still in his sleepwear, and said "sorry I've only made enough coffee for two. I can make some more but you'll have to wait a bit, or you can have a tea, Mrs…? Or is it Ms?" He soaked in her look of pure disbelief, and the way her curious gaze darted at Will before focusing back on Malcolm. She shook off the shock quickly though, stepping up to shake his hand. "It's Dr. actually, Dr. Alana Bloom." She gave him a smile that looked pinched at the edges. "It's nice to meet you, Mr…"

"Call me Malcolm," he grinned. "Now come on Will, I made your coffee just how you like it." Will gave him a smile, clearly unaware of Dr Bloom's widening eyes.

Malcolm had known he would have a good time seeing Will again, but he had never imagined it would be so fun.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Malcolm meets Will's colleagues

Chapter Notes

You might notice in this chapter that I've moved around the Hannibal timeline a bit to fit this story. I've also repurposed a few bits of dialogue from the show (which I do not own) in an attempt to keep some canon.
This chapter is double the length of the first one, and I hope you enjoy!

As much as Malcolm probably thought otherwise, Will knew what his friend was doing. He was acting more like he was Will's boyfriend rather than his long-time best friend. Will wasn't sure why, but he'd let Malcolm have his fun. He doubted Malcolm had had much fun lately. Besides, it would allow him to gauge Alana's reactions.

He still had feelings for her, although they had all rolled together into a complex beast since they had started working together. She was not as much a source of comfort as she had used to be, all mixed up with his… complicated relationship with Jack. 'She's not your paddle anymore' whispered a traitorous voice in the back of Will's head. 'Not like Dr. Lecter is now.'

Will smiled inwardly at the thought of Dr. Lecter. He hadn't been sure what to make of the man at first. Well, that wasn't true, he had hated him on sight due to his unfortunate profession. But Dr Lecter hadn't tried to crack open Will's head. Yet. He had been patient and calm and impossible to read. And what a relief that had been. What a reprieve their sessions were after whole days of relentlessly reading people in the hopes he could save lives. Yes, Will was thankful for Dr. Lecter and how he seemed to understand Will and accept even his darkest desires. Will could still remember the easy way he had acknowledged Will's confession. The words "I liked killing Hobbs" rang out repeatedly in Will's brain and he quickly brought his attention back to the present.

They had just reached the kitchen table. Will moved the books he had left on it out of the way as Malcolm fetched their coffees. Will then drew out the chairs and looked apologetically at Malcolm as he suddenly remembered he only had two chairs. Malcolm spoke before he could say anything though. "It's okay, I'll stand." Will nodded and sat, as Malcolm fussed with coffee machine, making another coffee for Alana. Alana looked awkward, thrown off balance. Will wondered if it was because of Malcolm or Abigail. Abigail. Will was once

again overtaken with the urge to grab his coat. He couldn't believe Abigail had actually woken up. But if he left immediately, what would happen with Malcolm? He didn't want to leave him behind. The FBI trying to fire him had obviously hit home, and Will was worried for his friend. So he decided he would hear out what Alana had to say before he making any move to leave. He looked at the woman in question and saw she was staring at Malcolm as he leaned against the stove, looking for all the world like they were in his house.

Will grunted and Alana turned to face him, a flash of guilt on her face. Will quickly avoided her gaze. "So. Abigail is awake?"

Malcolm's face brightened. "Abigail? The girl in the coma? The one you saved?" Will flinched as he remembered just how he had 'saved' Abigail and Malcolm's gaze softened. He looked like he was about to get up and comfort Will so Will gave a short shake of his head. Malcolm relaxed back against the stove.

Alana opened her mouth and, for once, Will had no idea what was about to come out. Was she going to ask about Malcolm? Was she going to deny Will a visit to Abigail, deny his responsibility? Thankfully, she was interrupted by the ringing of Will's house phone. Less thankfully, Will knew it was Jack without even looking at the phone. The air felt heavy and suffocating as they all sat (or stood, in Malcolm's case), waiting for the phone to stop ringing. Eventually it did and Alana opened her mouth again, only for the phone to ring again. When it finally stopped, Will asked: "Is he going to keep calling?"

Alana spoke hastily, as though she wanted to finish the conversation as quickly as possible. "Jack wants you to see her."

"And you don't," Malcolm cut in. Alana swivelled to look at him again. "Why is that?"

"Because she's concerned about me," Will explained. "And she's concerned about Abigail. She doesn't want us to rush into meeting each other. It could be… precarious, given the…" the what? The guilt? The responsibility? The fear? "the obligation I feel. To step in as a father figure to Abigail after killing hers." The words felt blunt on his tongue. He'd said them anyway.

"You don't have to be her father Will," Malcolm said softly. The words still cut Will. "You don't have to try and be your Dad all the time, you know."

Will did know. The reason he tried to help people was because his father had drilled that message into him from a young age. "Be kind, help people, no matter what they do to you. You understand people and their needs better than anyone else can, so you can meet those needs unlike anyone else," he had repeated and repeated and repeated. And Will had always nodded and thought: 'I'll try and do you proud, but some people don't deserve their needs being met'. It was because he understood them that he knew that.

Will wanted to let out all his conflicting emotions, wanted to unspool his thoughts and cut out the ones that hurt him. How he wanted. He knew Malcolm, of all people would understand. But he wasn't alone with Malcolm, Alana was there too. So all he said was: "Malcolm, let's talk about this later."

Malcolm nodded. Alana looked curious but she didn't push it. She said: "you're right Will. I want you to get what you need. And I want Abigail to get what she needs. What Jack needs, I'm not as concerned about." Will smiled at that. He was glad she was on his side, as much as there were sides.

"I don't care about Jack." Will said. "For now," he amended. "I care about Abigail. She has no-one."

"You can't be her everyone, Will," Alana said. 'I can try', Will thought, but he knew she was right. "You don't have to draw a line, but you might want to know where your line is."

"Keep my distance?" Will asked. Alana paused for a moment, and Malcolm shifted behind her, finally putting down his empty coffee mug on the stove top. Will had barely drunk from his own. It had probably become lukewarm. The reminder of Malcolm's presence was welcome. Maybe he had to wait to speak to Abigail, but at least he wouldn't have to wait alone.

Alana continued to speak. Talking about how she didn't want to insult him, he asked for her to "say it the insulting way" anyway and listened as she compared Abigail to his dogs. It hurt but he understood. Dogs were easy, people weren't. He said as much.

"I get it. I can trust a dog to be a dog but I can't trust Abigail Hobbs to be who I think she is."

"The first person Abigail talks to about what happened can't be anyone who was there when it happened. That means no Dr. Lecter, either."
"Much less the guy who killed Dad," Will sighed.
"Let me reach out to her my own way," Alana responded, sounding relieved.

They ended up agreeing that Will would at least wait for the weekend to be over before visiting Abigail (who had been moved from Johns Hopkins to some fancy psychiatric hospital), to give Alana time to approach her cautiously first. Alana left quickly after that, with one last curious glance at Malcolm.

As soon as she was gone, Malcolm took her seat. "So," Will looked at him, grateful to have someone familiar with him. To keep him out of the doubts and fears hounding him since he'd heard of Abigail waking up. To distract him. "Who's, Dr Lecter then?"

"What?" Asked Will lamely.

"Dr. Bloom mentioned a Dr. Lecter just now. Who is that? I don't recognise the name."

"Oh," Will said, "he's working with us on some cases. He's also my er, unofficial psychiatrist."

"Unofficial?"

"We have… conversations."

"So he's your friend." Will couldn't tell if Malcolm was pleased or upset. He was better at hiding his tells from Will than most people were. He knew all of the usual tells after all.

“I guess,” Will shrugged, suddenly uncomfortable. “He wants to be. I think.”

“You think?” Malcolm sounded surprised, and his eyes met Will’s own. “You don’t sound certain. You can’t tell? With him?”

“He’s like a blank slate,” Will explained. “I’m starting to catch small flickers of feeling, but only occasionally and very weakly.”

“You like it. You like that you can’t read him. It’s a relief, after always being caught in everyone else’s emotions all the time, to have someone be your rock.”

“My paddle.”

“Sorry?”

“He’s my paddle. For when I get lost in my cases.”

There was a moment of silence. Then. “I’m glad.”

“You are?”

“Of course. You need someone like that. To help guide you out of the dark places your mind crawls into.”

“You’re not mad?” ‘You’re not mad that it’s no longer you?’ Will wanted to say. ‘That I have replaced you?’

“Mad?” Malcolm laughed and it made Will feel like a weight had been lifted off of his shoulders. “I could never be mad at you Will. Not properly. I wasn’t there for you for ten years, of course you have new friends, and I’m happy for you. You deserve them.”

Will smiled.

“I want to meet them though,” Malcolm continued. “Make sure they’re good enough for you.”

Will laughed. “You know I’m two years older than you, right?”

“So?”

“So, you don’t need to act like I’m your younger sibling or something.” Will wanted to take the words back as soon as he said them, but Malcolm seemed unfazed.

“You are my brother Will. Maybe not by blood, but there are bonds stronger than blood.” Will knew he was thinking of Gil and smiled. Gil and Malcolm were some of the only parts of New York he missed. He certainly didn’t miss the crowds, or his mother.

“You’re right,” Will said and Malcolm beamed at him.

“I always am. Now why don’t we go fishing?”

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Malcolm was terrible at fishing, just like Will knew he would be. He was the least patient person Will knew, apart from maybe Jack, although Jack at least seemed the type to be patient for the people he loved. Malcolm tried to fish for about fifteen minutes, then grew restless and decided to explore the surrounding area instead. He took half of the dogs with him. They had quickly fallen in love with him, eager to follow his commands and play with him. Buster was probably Malcolm's biggest fan, never leaving him alone for even a minute.

Will had just caught his twenty third fish of the day when Malcolm trudged back looking like he had rolled around in the mud with the dogs. He had such a wide smile on his face, Will was helpless but to smile back.

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They spent the rest of the weekend alternating between fishing, cooking, drinking whiskey and tying lures (which Malcolm was surprisingly good at, once he settled into it, he had an eye for detail). Before they went to their respective beds extremely early Monday morning, Malcolm decided to actually talk about his stay with Will.

"So you're teaching tomorrow – I mean later today – right?"

"Yeah," Will grunted. "Morning class. A bit too eager that class."

"Can I attend?"

"What, you want to be in my class?"

"Sure – who knows, I might actually learn something useful for once!" Will found himself chuckling at that. Wow, he was seriously drunk.

"Okay, why not."

Which was why four hours later, they both prepared to leave for Quantico. Malcolm, who had taken to stealing Will's clothes, was fussily laying out his outfit for the day as Will hurriedly stuffed class notes into his bag. They left just under twenty minutes later. Will found himself driving more carefully with Malcolm with him than he usually would. 'Maybe Malcolm is a good influence' he thought. Then shook his head chuckling under his breath. His hangover protested otherwise, although it wasn't too bad. Not as bad as those awful headaches he had been experiencing for the past month. He'd taken to carrying lots of aspirin with him, as they kept popping up, seemingly more intense each time.

The drive was peaceful, 'the calm before the storm', Will guessed. And he was right.

Will's class went well. It started with Garret Jacob Hobbs which led to Abigail which eventually led to the Copy Cat Killer. As he approached the last ten minutes of the class he saw two people enter the room. One was clearly Jack Crawford, his silhouette unmistakable even in the low light. The other, Will made out to be Dr. Lecter, whose regal posture and features made him just as unmistakable. He tried not to think about why they were there, sat

down and let his gaze travel over the students – bored, exhausted, way too excited – to land on Malcolm, who (sitting in the front row, having arrived with Will) smiled encouragingly. Will felt the tension ease and continued speaking.

After his lecture, Will was immediately descended on by Jack, Dr. Lecter trailing purposefully slowly behind him.

Jack stopped in front of Will, his stare intimidating. “Will. I want you to speak to Abigail.”

“Already?” Will asked, hoping he didn’t sound too eager, too afraid, too unstable. “I thought Alana didn’t want me to–”

“We spoke to Alana this morning and Dr. Lecter and I have overruled her decision based on her observations on Abigail from the day before yesterday.”

Dr. Lecter stood impassive behind Jack. Still. Too still. He didn’t approve of Jack’s phrasing. But he was too polite to speak up against it. Behind Dr. Lecter Will could see Malcolm shifting, about to stand up.

“You think she was involved,” Will muttered. “She wasn’t.”

“You don’t know that for sure. Take a look at her awake. Use your imagination, use whatever it takes Will, I have seven families demanding answers.”

“I’m telling you Jack, she’s a traumatized child, this will only traumatize her further.”

“She’s a teenager, and I’m telling you to look.”

“As an expert in trauma, I’d advise you to listen to Will,” Malcolm said appearing in between Hannibal and Jack and walking over to Will to place a comforting hand on his shoulder. Will relaxed into the touch, grateful for his friend’s support. He knew he was not objective when it came to Abigail Hobbs. Knew he didn’t want to believe she had been involved in her father’s murders. It didn’t stop him from feeling defensive though, and knowing Malcolm was by his side helped.

Jack shot Malcolm a fierce glare. “This isn’t a discussion for students,” he barked.

Will looked Jack in the eyes, with a determination he hadn’t felt in so long he’d forgotten what it was like to have, and said: “he’s not a student.”

Jack turned his stare back on Will, expectant for more answers. Will didn’t give him any. Will spotted a glint of intrigue in Dr. Lecter’s eyes. He stepped forwards to meet Malcolm and Will and stretched out his hand. “Doctor Hannibal Lecter. It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

Malcolm took Dr. Lecter’s hand and shook it. “So you’re Dr. Lecter,” he grinned, blatantly looking Dr. Lecter up and down. “Will has good taste.” Will fought down a flush and tried to subtly elbow Malcolm in the ribs. Judging by the secretive smile on Dr. Lecter’s face he wasn’t successful. “In friends.” Malcolm added far too late. “Good taste in friends.”

Jack looked unamused and took the short (awkward) silence as a chance to cut in. “Who are you?”

“Malcolm,” Malcolm stated. “I’d say it was good to meet you, but that’d be a lie.” Jack spluttered as Malcom led Will out of the lecture hall, calling over his shoulder: “well, we’re off to see Abigail now. Bye!”

Will laughed helplessly as soon as they were in the hallway, feeling like a teenager again. “I can’t believe you spoke like that to Jack.”

Malcolm shrugged. “He seems like a jerk, I’m happy to put him down a few pegs.”

Will sighed, “he means well. He just wants to help people.”

“Yeah, and I want to help you. You’re a person, do you not also deserve help?”

Will shook his head. “I don’t need help.” Malcolm looked like he was on the verge of arguing so Will quickly cut him off. “But if I did, I’d want you to be the one to help me.”

“Or Dr. Lecter, right?” Malcolm teased. Will felt his face flush. “Oh come on Will, I know your type and he is it. It helps that he’s so unreadable. I know what you mean now when you said he’s a blank slate.”

“I know right?” Will asked a bit too enthusiastically. “He’s someone I can rely on to anchor me. Like I said before, he’s my paddle.”

Malcolm smiled, a small tender thing. “Just be careful Will.”

Will wanted to ask why, but instead he simply nodded. “So I’m guessing you have no idea where Abigail is at the moment?”

Malcolm snorted. “Me? How would I know?”

There was a polite clearing of the throat from behind them and Will jumped. His heart dropped even before he turned around to see Dr. Lecter with that charming small cryptic smile of his. “How much did you hear of that?” he asked hurriedly.

“Enough to know I have the answer to your question.” Will stared at him dumbly. “I can drive you to where Abigail is currently staying.”

“Oh.” Will said. “You don’t have to–” Malcolm nudged him before he could finish his sentence.

“Thanks, that’d be great,” Malcolm smiled. Dr. Lecter’s smile widened almost imperceptibly but Will caught it and it made his heart beat faster. Malcolm was right, Dr. Lecter was just his type. Easy to talk to, calm, with an air of darkness and mystery to him that Will just wanted to wrap himself in. And accepting and understanding of Will’s differences. That was why Will would never approach the topic. He didn’t want to lose such an easy friendship. Nevermind the fact that they were psychiatrist and patient, even if unofficially. Will shut down his trail of thoughts as they stepped into Dr. Lecter’s Bentley.

*

The drive to Port Haven Psychiatric Facility, the psychiatric hospital Abigail was staying at (kept in, trapped in, Will's worst nightmare), was shorter than Will had expected. It felt like one moment they were in Quantico and another they were being guided to Abigail's room. Someone was talking as they entered and Will felt paralyzed as he caught the tail end of what was being said: "Will Graham. Works for the FBI but isn't FBI. He captures insane men because he can think like them," the speaker, a woman with very recognizable red hair turned to look at him, them, just as she finished off by saying "because he is insane."

Will breathed in deeply and then said, in the calmest tone he could manage, "would you excuse us please." The woman, who was most certainly Freddie Lounds, got up as he entered the room further, followed closely by Malcolm and then Dr. Lecter. Will felt more secure in the knowledge that he was not alone and looked in Abigail's direction as he said: "I'm special agent Will Graham". She looked so young, so determined to be strong, be brave. He had seen that look in Malcolm's eyes when they were younger. He had seen that look in his own, too.

Freddie kept talking. "By special agent he means not really an agent. He didn't get through the screening process." She looked right at him as she said: "too unstable."

It hurt and Will knew that Malcolm knew it hurt. That old sting, of being rejected by the FBI while his best friend who was just as unstable got in, hurt more than he thought it would. Probably because the wound had been reopened by Malcolm's sudden reappearance. Will tried to focus on that. Malcolm was with him again. They were friends again. That was more important than a job that would have ripped Will apart anyway, if the way his recent experiences had been going told him anything. He glanced at Malcolm whose hands had clenched into fists. Will shook his head subtly hoping Malcolm would listen. He didn't need his friend's slightly unreliable temper scaring off Abigail who was clearly studying them all carefully.

Mercifully, Dr. Lecter was the one who spoke up. "I really must insist you leave the room."

Freddie looked at Abigail again, saying "if you want to talk", and passing out a card which Will instantly snatched from her hand. He tucked it into his inner jacket pocket for Malcolm to shred later. As Freddie left, Will motioned for Malcolm to follow her. Malcolm nodded, and closed the door quietly behind him.

"Abigail," Will began, "this is Dr. Lecter." Dr. Lecter stepped forward. "Do you remember us?"

Abigail looked at them. And said, with a confidence Will knew she didn't really possess, "I remember you. You killed my dad."

Will nodded slightly, wanting to say a hundred things but suddenly unsure of how to word them, afraid they might crawl their way out of his mouth anyway.

Dr. Lecter broke through the heavy silence. "You've been in bed for days, Abigail. Why don't we have a walk?"

It was difficult, speaking to Abigail. Will kept seeing Malcolm in her place, confessing to Will the memories and night terrors that haunted him with a shaky voice. He could see him in Abigail as her eyes watered with tears she fought back desperately. It made his words softer, more caring than he intended them to be. It didn't, however, stop him from noticing the intentional way she spoke, the way she was forcing herself to show a vulnerable side in order to hide another side of herself. Will tried not to think of how much he could relate to that. Instead he tried to open himself up a bit in an attempt to get her to relate to him. "I worry about nightmares too," he murmured.

He regretted it when Abigail inevitably asked: "do you have nightmares about killing my Dad?"

"Sometimes it's hard for me to dream about much else," he said, and it was true. Although it was also true that he had dreamed of murder for a long time before killing Garret Jacob Hobbs too.

"So killing somebody, even if you have to do it… it feels that bad?"

Will felt terribly conscious of the fact that Dr. Lecter stood beside him, well aware of the lie, as he said: "it's the ugliest thing in the world."

Will's heart sank when, after a moment, Abigail said: "I wanna go home."

*

Will felt guilty of how relieved he was to leave Abigail behind as they left Port Haven and drew near to Dr. Lecter's flashy Bentley, where Malcolm and Freddie stood talking in hushed tones. Will was reassured to see that they both seemed civil as well as unscathed. Will knew of Malcolm's tendency to start fights, especially over causes or people he felt passionately about.

Freddie and Malcolm both looked up at their approach. Freddie looked at Malcolm and then Dr. Lecter purposefully before advancing towards Will. "Special agent Graham," she said smoothly. "I never formally introduced myself. I'm Freddie Lounds." She held out her hand for Will to shake but he ignored it, putting his glasses back on as though they were armor, which in a way they were.

"Trying to salvage this joke from the mouth of madness?" Will asked, wishing she would just leave him alone. Behind her, he heard Malcolm snicker at his words and it fortified him.

"Please. Let me apologize for my behaviour in there. It was sloppy. And misguided. And hurtful." She tried to make eye contact, which Will carefully avoided. He didn't know what to say. Did she really think her little act would work on him? He was a criminal profiler with a so-called empathy disorder, and she knew that. She was a stubborn, manipulative liar through and through and he knew that.

Probably sensing that Will wasn't about to respond, Dr. Lecter responded for him. "Miss Lounds, now isn't the time." Will shot him a grateful look.

Freddie stared at Dr. Lecter for a moment, a little tension building in her posture, before she turned back to Will and it melted away. Behind her, Malcolm stepped closer to them, fully in Will's line of sight once more. Will hoped he wouldn't do anything stupid.

Freddie continued talking: "look, you and I may have our own reasons for being here, but I also think we both genuinely care about what happens to Abigail Hobbs." Something deep and dark in Will scoffed at that. How dare Freddie compare her 'caring' for Abigail, to his love, his devotion to his daughter? Will tried to shake off Garret Jacob Hobbs and focus more on Freddie's words. He felt dumfounded, she really was trying to appeal to him after all that she had said to Abigail, all she had written in that bogus article.

"You called me insane," he said, the words rushing out before he could stop them.

"I can undo that," she smiled.

Will tried to be cautious, tried to weigh out his words, but he could still feel Garret Jacob Hobbs possessive anger thrumming inside him. "You help Abigail see me as more than her father's killer and I help you with… online ad sales?" The disdain was clear in his voice, as much as he'd tried to hold it back.

"I can undo what I said," Freddie repeated. "I can also make it a lot worse."

And suddenly that anger was flaring up in him again, some of it Garret Jacob Hobbs' but most of it his and he heard his voice turn cold as he stepped closer to Freddie and said: "Miss Lounds… it's not very smart to piss of a guy who thinks about killing people for a living."

*

The drive back to Quantico was in complete silence. Dr. Lecter didn't even play the classical music he had on the way to Port Haven. Will didn't mind. He knew he'd pay the price for testing Freddie, but it had made him feel powerful, and he liked that feeling. Like stepping out of his increasingly unsteady body into a new one, one that actually fit him, him and his darkest desires. A glance at Malcolm, who seemed to be counting something under his breath while staring out of the window, caused Will to smile.

*

"It's not very smart to piss off a guy who thinks about killing people for a living," Jack intoned. "You know what else isn't very smart?" he asked, looking at them. Them was Dr. Lecter, Will and Alana all seated in front of Jack. Malcolm stood behind them; Will could hear the light tapping of his fingers as he typed out things on his phone. Probably texting someone. But who? Jessica, Ainsley or Gil? Before he came to a conclusion his focus was brought back to Jack's voice. "You were there," he said, pointedly looking at Hannibal. Pointedly ignoring Malcolm. "And you let those words leave his mouth."

"I trust Will to speak for himself," Dr. Lecter said calmly.

Something warm bloomed in Will's chest at that. At least he could trust Dr. Lecter to never baby him.

“Evidently you shouldn’t,” Jack replied.

“I’m just happy the story wasn’t about Abigail Hobbs,” Alana said. Will was happy for the change of subject, less happy about the subject itself.

“Well, then it’s a victory,” Jack said, his tone utterly displeased. Will knew what was coming. “So Abigail Hobbs wants to go home. Let’s take her home.”

Alana leaned forward to speak, but Malcolm beat her to it. “Wait a minute, wait a minute, before we get to that Jack, refresh your page.” Jack stared at him, still and silent as a statue. “You still have Freddie’s article open on your laptop, right?” Malcolm didn’t wait for a reply. “Well refresh the page.” Jack continued to stare.

“Do it Jack,” Will muttered. “It’s easiest to just go along with him and it’ll probably only take a minute.” Jack continued to stare at Malcolm. And then, slowly, ever so slowly, reached for his laptop, and (presumably) refreshed the page. From where he was sitting, Will couldn’t see the screen, but he could take in Jack’s surprised blink. “What happened Jack?” he asked.

“It’s gone. The article is gone.”

“Yes!” Malcolm exclaimed, and they all startled (except for Dr. Lecter who looked as unflappable as ever) and turned to face him.

“What did you do?” Will asked, amusement sneaking into his voice.

“I warned her what would happen if she wrote about you again, and I followed up on my warning.” At Will’s raised eyebrow he added. “Asked a favour.”

“From Jessica? Or Ainsley?”

“Ainsley.” That made sense. Last he heard, Ainsley had become a rather well respected figure as a journalist despite her tainted past, or perhaps because of it. She must have had connections stronger than those of Freddie Lounds.

“Abigail Hobbs.” Jack said, in an attempt to continue their earlier conversation. It worked. The focus returned to him. “Let’s take her home.”

“What Abigail wants and what she needs are two different things. Taking her out of a controlled environment would be reckless,” Alana said.

“You said she was practical,” Jack stated.

Will hummed. “That could just mean she has a dissociative disorder,” he suggested. He wasn’t going to bring up his own suspicions, not when they weren’t confirmed. Not to Jack, at least.
“You take her home, she may experience intense emotions, respond aggressively. Or re-enact some aspect of the traumatic event without even realizing it,” Alana said, and Will found himself nodding along.

“Dr. Lecter?” Jack asked.
“Dr. Bloom is right,” Will almost sighed in relief. But then Dr. Lecter continued talking: “but there is a scenario where revisiting the trauma event could help Abigail heal and actually prevent denial.” Alana shook her head and Will found himself copying her. He could see that Jack had already decided.

“That is a possibility,” Will tried, “but I know a bit about trauma, and this is too soon. I agree with Dr. Bloom.” Alana gave him a grateful smile. Will didn’t find it as heart-warming as he would’ve before. Before they had started working cases together. Before meeting Dr. Lecter.

“And I agree with Will,” Malcolm said. Jack looked ready to order him to leave but Malcolm steamrolled on. “As I said before, you could call me somewhat of an expert on trauma. I don’t know all the details of Abigail’s case but I know enough. She hasn’t had enough time to adjust to the many new realities she now has to face. Her father is a serial killer. He ate his victims. His victims all looked like her. He wanted to eat her. He killed her mother. He himself was killed.” At that, Malcolm offered Will an apologetic smile. “That’s a lot to deal with, let alone for a teenager. She’s only just woken up”

“It’s been three days,” Jack said matter-of-factly.

“And you think three days is enough?” Malcolm laughed incredulously. “She may believe she wants to go home already, and I know you’re under pressure from the families to come up with answers, but those answers would come at the cost of another girl’s safety and mental well-being.”

Jack clearly wanted to protest, but to Will’s surprise Dr. Lecter spoke up. “I agree with Malcolm. A return home for Abigail may assist with the healing process, but it may also hinder it. Abigail also needs time to readjust to her new relationships with Will and I before we should take her anywhere. Otherwise she may end up assigning the anger she carries to her father over to us. Which would further prevent us from receiving any of the answers you desire, Jack.”

They all stared at Jack until he gave a curt nod and said: “We’ll wait a week. No longer than that. Don’t make me regret it.”

Everyone except Jack got up to go.

“Will,” Jack called, and Will gestured for the others to wait for him outside. Malcolm and Dr. Lecter nodded in unison, Alana had already left, but not without one last concerned look at Will. Will slumped back into his seat and studiously avoided looking Jack in the eye. “Who is that man?” Jack asked, his voice terse.

“Malcolm?” Will asked. Jack nodded. “He’s an old friend of mine. You might have heard of him actually.” Jack looked both curious and impatient ('when wasn’t he impatient', Will sighed inwardly) as he motioned for Will to carry on talking. “Malcolm Bright.”

Malcolm definitely had a reputation at the FBI because recognition dawned on Jack immediately. He opened his mouth to talk, probably ask lots of questions, and suddenly Will felt exhausted. The day had really taken a toll on him and he could feel that headache

coming. He got up and said: “now you know who he is, you understand why I need to keep an eye on him. See you later Jack.” He hoped he didn’t.

When he stepped out into the hall he didn’t see Malcolm and Hannibal at first. After a moment of looking around, he spotted them near the door of an empty classroom. As he walked closer, the air felt heavier and he noticed one of Malcolm’s hands was behind his back. It was trembling. Will quickly stepped in between them. “I hope Malcolm hasn’t told you anything embarrassing about me,” He said, hoping to lighten the mood. Malcolm immediately laughed, and even though it sounded a bit hollow, it calmed Will.

“Not at all,” Dr. Lecter said. “he was very courteous, in fact.”

“Well we should get going, I’ve got a headache coming on.” Will noticed Malcolm’s eyes flick over to him but ignored it. “See you at our next session Dr. Lecter.”

“Goodbye Will, Malcolm,” Dr. Lecter nodded at them as Will dragged Malcolm with him to Will’s car (so beat up and old his mother would detest it, which was exactly why Will loved it so much).

*

That night they skipped the whiskey and went straight to bed, that was how drained Will felt. He fell asleep almost immediately, and the next thing he knew he was walking down a long dark road. He could hear hooves lightly clopping behind him and knew he was being followed by a giant stag coated in feathers. Knew without even looking. Knew because he had seen it before. His head ached suddenly and then there were bright lights shining right into his eyes. He blinked and lifted his arm up in a weak defence. He was suddenly aware of how cold it was, of the rough asphalt under his feet. He was awake?

Will could hear voices but they sounded distant. The words were repeated. “You lost?”

“What?” Will asked dumbly. Was he lost? Was he really awake? Was he really in reality, or still trapped in a reality of his own making?

“What’s your name?” The man asked, and Will took in his clothes. He was a police officer. There were worse people who could’ve discovered Will in such a state. He shivered and tried not to think about it.

“Will Graham,” he said.

He noticed Winston beside him and when he moved to stroke him, noticed his cut up feet too. “Can I sit down? My feet hurt.” The two cops led him to their car and he sat in the back with Winston in his lap as they ran through the routine questions.

Eventually one of the officers, the one who had been taking the lead in the speaking, asked “is there someone we can call for you Mr. Graham? Before we take you home?”

Will debated for a moment who to call, pleased with the reminder that he had two friends he could rely on. Dr. Lecter, or Malcolm? In the end he went with Malcolm and rattled off the

number he still remembered clearly. The officer handed him the phone and hearing Malcolm's voice soothed the fearful beast trapped inside him. Helped him realise he truly was awake, and he truly had been sleepwalking. "Malcolm," Will said over Malcolm's worrying, relentless speaking, "I think something is wrong with me."

"Okay, Will, okay. Come on home and we'll figure this out." Will laughed, that reminded Will of those affirmations he had seen Malcolm read every morning when they lived together. Malcolm was trying to convince himself more than he was trying to convince Will.

"Okay Malcolm" he murmured, his headache back in full force. He ended the call and handed the phone back to the apprehensive looking police officer. "I'm ready to go home now," he said.

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When he finally got home, Malcolm was waiting on the porch and Will stumbled into his open arms. As they hugged, Malcolm whispered: "you're clearly unwell Will, I think we'd better get you to a hospital." Will wanted to protest, but he could tell his friend was upset and didn't want to upset him further.

"Alright Malcolm."

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

We take a look at the effects of Will's absence

Chapter Notes

Thank you so much for all of your lovely comments, they've inspired me to get to work on the sequel :)

Alana had been surprised by Hannibal's invite to breakfast. He had extended a couple of dinner invitations previously, some of which she had sadly had to decline on account of drowning in work from Jack. She hadn't expected the next step to be him inviting her to breakfast. They were close, but she had never seen Hannibal be particularly close to someone. She understood. Their profession brought with it a natural sort of guardedness against others. She knew cooking was his way of caring for himself and others, but that usually came in the form of dinner parties. Not that Alana was complaining. She savoured the rich taste of the pancetta on her tongue and hummed. "Delicious," she murmured after finishing off the bite. Hannibal gave her a small smile before eating from his own plate.

They ate in silence, enjoying the good food. As Hannibal made no move to speak, Alana decided it was the perfect time to discuss something that had been worrying her. Hannibal was an exemplary listener, and he would understand her concerns more than anyone else would. "I'm worried about Will," she said. Hannibal dipped his head and Alana took it as an invitation to expand further. "That man, Malcolm, did you know he's living with Will at the moment?" She didn't wait for a reply, unable to stop after having started talking, all her worries rolling off her tongue into the early morning air. "Well, he is, and, frankly, I don't trust him. He wasn't outwardly antagonistic when we first met, but he made clear he didn't approve of how I care for Will. I am relieved Will has a… friend, but I'm not sure Malcolm is an appropriate one. The way he acts around Will… I believe they have a co-dependant relationship, which is the last thing Will needs right now. He needs a support network. Not one person to carry the weight of all his troubles. Especially one untrained in doing so."

"Malcolm seems to be a well-educated young man. I'm sure he knows his limits; knows how much of Will's troubles he can carry."

"That's the thing," Alana huffed, "I don't think he knows any limits. You saw the way he spoke to Jack. How did he speak to you?"

“We had a short conversation while Will was talking to Jack. I believe he gave me what Ms. Katz would call a ‘shovel talk’,” Hannibal chuckled good naturedly.

“He threatened you,” Alana said.

“I wouldn’t say threatened.” Hannibal weighed his words carefully before continuing. “it was more of a warning. To not hurt Will.”

“See, that’s exactly what I’m worried about,” Alana explained. “him warning you off of Will is a classic example of co-dependence. He could be trying to isolate Will, trying to get Will to rely more fully on him.”

“Perhaps,” Hannibal conceded. “Although he could also just be trying to help Will the only way he knows how to. Will has implied negative experiences with psychiatrists in his personal history, perhaps Malcolm is wanting to prevent repeats of the past.”

“If he wanted to help Will, he would want Will to see a capable psychiatrist!” Alana exclaimed. “One such as yourself. If he truly wanted to help, he would want to learn all the facts about Will’s new friends and psychiatrist rather than judging us immediately. He seems to be narcissistic, and overly-confident that he knows what is best for Will.”

“Well,” Hannibal said, “Malcolm does seem to be deeply troubled. He did refer to himself as an ‘expert on trauma’ twice.”

“Which suggests that he relies on Will for support as much as Will seems to rely on him. Their relationship is just not healthy. I think–” Alana didn’t get to say what she thought as she was interrupted by her phone ringing. “Sorry,” Alana said, slightly embarrassed. She picked her phone up from out of her handbag and read off of the screen. “It’s Jack, I should take this.” Hannibal gestured for her to go ahead.

“Jack, good morning.”

“Have you seen Will? Recently.” Alana went alert at the apprehensive tone to Jack’s voice. Hannibal, clearly picking up on her anxiety, straightened up beside her.

“Not since Monday, why?”

“Goddammit!” Alana flinched at the sudden shout. After a moment Jack seemed to have calmed down enough to explain: “Will hasn’t taught his classes for two days. It wasn’t reported as his students assumed he was working for me those days. He wasn’t. No-one I’ve asked has seen Will since Monday afternoon.” A pause. “The only person I haven’t asked yet is Dr. Lecter.”

“Oh, well, I’m with Hannibal – Dr. Lecter – right now, I can ask him for you.” Hannibal tilted his head inquisitively and Alana turned to face him properly to ask: “have you seen or spoken to Will since Monday?”

Hannibal shook his head “I’m afraid not, although we have an appointment, an unofficial one of course, this evening.”

Alana turned her focus back to her phone. “Jack, he said–”

“I heard,” Jack said curtly. Then: “the only other person I could think to ask would unfortunately be Malcolm. But I don’t have his number, do you?”

“No I don’t. Hannibal, do you know Malcolm’s number?” Alana asked.

“I have to admit I do not.”

Jack’s sigh sounded terribly loud and weary through the phone. Alana thought for a moment. “How do we know that Malcolm isn’t the reason Will is missing?” She wondered aloud.

“That’s a good point,” Jack said. “The FBI dismissed him for being reckless and impulsive, said he was dangerous. Apparently he punched a county sheriff.” Alana took that in.

“Wait, he worked for the FBI? How do you know all this Jack? You know who he is and you didn’t tell us?” Hannibal caught Alana’s eye, clearly curious as to what Jack had said. Alana hoped her eyes conveyed the message ‘I’ll tell you later.’

“Doesn’t matter,” Jack said dismissively. “What matters is that Will went home with someone the FBI suggests has psychopathic tendencies and hasn’t been seen since. I’m going to get Price, Zeller and Katz on it. You and Dr. Lecter go to Will’s house and make sure he’s not hiding there. If you can't find him, search for clues.” Jack hung up before Alana could say anything else.

She put her phone back in her handbag and looked Hannibal in the eyes. “Jack knows things about Malcolm that we don’t. Said he used to work for the FBI. That they called him reckless, dangerous and said he may have ‘psychopathic tendencies’.”

Hannibal’s mouth tightened at the edges. “That’s worrying.”

“Indeed.”

“Did Jack happen to tell you Malcolm’s surname? It may help us know what has happened to him and Will if we research him first.”

“No, but he wants us to go to Will’s house and ‘search for clues’.”

Hannibal nodded decisively. “Then that’s what we shall do.”

Alana looked at him, surprised. “You don’t have any patients today?”

“Not this morning no, and my early afternoon regular called to cancel two days ago.”

All Alana could say to that was: “okay. Let’s go then.”

*

The drive to Will’s house was tense.

That tension was nothing compared to the one they felt standing in front of Will's clearly empty house. There was absolutely no sign of the dogs being home, let alone any people. Alana went to knock even though she knew it was futile. She was right. After almost five minutes she turned to Hannibal, unsure what to do next.

"I know where Will's spare key is," Hannibal stated. At Alana's look of surprise, Hannibal explained: "Last session Will asked me if I could look after his dogs if he was ever away on a case. He told me where to find the spare key then." Alana nodded, slightly discomforted by the thought but not sure exactly why, and waited for Hannibal to gather the spare key. When he returned he opened the door quickly and stepped aside to let her in. The house was messier than it had been when Alana had last visited. Malcolm had very clearly made himself at home. Alana and Hannibal split up to search for anything that might hint where Malcolm and Will went. Alana took the downstairs floor and Hannibal searched upstairs.

Just as Alana was looking through a haphazard pile of papers dumped on the kitchen table, she got another call from Jack.

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Alana found Hannibal in one of the upstairs bedrooms inspecting something. He turned to face her when she entered. "That was Jack. On the phone. Said some cops found Will trying to get away from his house and they took him right back to Malcolm. That was Tuesday morning."

Hannibal frowned slightly. "Very concerning."

"Yes," Alana sighed. Things were not looking good for Will. "What have you found?" she asked.

"Something just as concerning," Hannibal said and stepped out of the way to let Alana have a better look at the bed. Or more specifically, the restraints attached to the bed. Alana gasped and took a step back. "They are well made," Hannibal said. "Very strong."

Alana shook her head.

"We should consider the facts," Hannibal continued.

"Yeah you're right." They went back downstairs and sat at the kitchen table to go over what they had discerned of the situation. "Someone Will clearly has known for a long time, but has never mentioned before suddenly appears at his home. We're not sure when, but he was first noticed by me here on Saturday morning. His name is Malcolm. He seems possessive of Will. He used to work for the FBI and was apparently reckless and dangerous, possibly violent. Both Malcolm and Will haven't been seen since Tuesday morning. The house is empty, we don't know what happened to Will's dogs. It looks like they left in a hurry. It also looks like Malcolm was going through Will's things before they left, particularly his papers, probably looking for something." Alana sighed. "We also found restraints upstairs which were probably used on Will. This all suggests Will is in deep trouble." Hannibal nodded gravely.

“As you said, Malcolm is possessive of Will, it is unlikely he would have killed him unless as a last resort,” Hannibal said slowly, trying to comfort her. Alana had to hold back a sob.

They were interrupted by the ringing of Alana’s phone once more. Alana pulled it out and handed it to Hannibal, still trying to smother her crying. Hannibal answered. “Jack I’ve put you on loud speaker so we can both hear you.”

“Price found Will.”

Alana breath caught in her throat.

“He’s in a private hospital. It’s about an hour long drive from his house. I’ll message you the directions.” He hung up.

Alana wiped at her face, accepting her phone as Hannibal gave it back to her. Will was alive. He was in the hospital. Alana wished Jack had given more information, worst case scenarios running one after the other through her head. Was he in a coma like Abigail had been? Was he well? Was he cut up? Was he bruised? Was his already fragile sense of self shattered further? Alana was terrified of finding out, but when Hannibal held out his hand she took it and followed him to his car.

*

When they arrived at Will’s hospital room Alana was surprised to find Malcolm there with him. “You!” She exclaimed, storming up to him, unable to help herself. “What did you do to him?” Malcolm looked confused.

Then he sneered. “Me? I didn’t do anything to him. You lot,” he said waving his hand to point at both Alana and Hannibal, “I’m not so sure about.” Alana paused, looking at Will properly for the first time since entering the room. He was asleep. He looked calmer than she had ever seen him. He was less pale than the last time she had seen him as well. He looked completely unscathed, not a scratch on him. Tuning into the rest of the room and all the machines Will was attached to, Alana could hear his steady heartbeat.

Hannibal stepped carefully between her and Malcolm and they both stared at him.

“I believe,” he started, “there has been a misunderstanding. Why don’t you explain everything to us Malcolm?”

Malcolm looked unhappy being told what to do, but complied, sitting back in his chair beside Will’s hospital bed. “The whole time I’ve been staying here I knew something was wrong with Will. He’s tired all the time, more than he used to be. Shaky, pale, has a high body temperature. I wrote it off as him having to deal with a difficult job and high stress. That was until he started disassociating and sleepwalking. Apparently he’s been hallucinating too. Then I knew for sure something was wrong. So I took him here, booked him in for as long as it takes.” He sighed. “The doctors ran some tests. Had him draw clocks. Said he has Anti-NMDA receptor encephalitis. They’re treating him now. Prescribed rest and meds. He’ll have to stay here for quite a while.”

Alana let that sink in, felt the guilt flare up. “You’re right,” she said. “Will is our responsibility and we should’ve noticed something. That could have had disastrous effects for Will if left untreated.”

“I know I’m right,” Malcolm said morosely, “I’m always right.” They all looked at Will: still, silent, asleep.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

The hospital

Chapter Notes

I am sorry this chapter is late, I had a couple of family emergencies that I had to deal with. This chapter and the next (which is basically an epilogue) are both very short compared to the others. However, the sequel is getting very long, so you'll have that to look forward to soon.

The nurse (stern but kind, Malcolm knew the type), had told Malcolm that Will was to have three visitors at a time and no more. Dr. Bloom had left. Dr. Lecter had also left, with a promise to return in the evening. However, some of Will's colleagues who Malcolm had not known had arrived during their absence. Beverly Katz, Brian Zeller and Jimmy Price, along with Malcolm, made four. Looking at the three friends fussing over Will and talking quietly to him, Malcolm decided one extra person did no harm. It wasn't like he was much of one to follow the rules in the first place.

He watched on as Jimmy chatted amiably to Will, who had woken up but was still sleepy. Beverly smiled at them, joining in occasionally to tease Will about something or other. Brian hung back at first, his body language radiating discomfort, but after a while, Jimmy casually brought him over and he relaxed a little and laughed with them. They stayed a couple of hours; it had already turned dark by the time Jimmy and Brian left. Beverly stayed behind a little longer. To Malcolm's surprise she walked over to speak to him. "So," she drawled, "you Will's boyfriend or something?"

Malcolm laughed. "Or something," he said and smiled.

"Well, thank you," Beverly said, tone weighed with genuine caring. Finally, Malcolm had found Will's real friends. "Will should have people to look after him. We're trying but evidently it wasn't enough. So we'll try harder now."

Malcolm didn't know what to say to that so he said: "thank you."

*

Dr. Lecter arrived soon after Beverly left. Will looked happy to see him, and Malcolm walked out into the hallway to give them some privacy. Just as Dr. Lecter was leaving again (almost an hour later), Malcolm caught him by the arm. Dr. Lecter gave him an intense stare that made Malcolm want to fidget. Fidget or run. He did neither. He said: “Can we talk?”

Dr. Lecter nodded.

“I know you’re not what you seem Dr. Lecter.” Before Dr. Lecter could respond, Malcolm hurried on. “But I don’t really care about you or how much darkness you hide as long as you use it to protect Will. I don’t know exactly what you want from him, but I know you at least find him interesting. If you look out for him, actually help him when he needs it, be whatever he wants you to be, I will leave you be. I won’t investigate further into you like I said I would last time.”

Malcolm steeled himself to stare back into that icy gaze to say: “however, if you ever try to hurt him, I will hurt you back. That I can promise.”

Dr. Lecter nodded and left.

*

The next day Will and Malcolm spoke about Dr. Lecter. “He brought me chicken soup!” Will laughed and Malcolm forced a smile. Will fixed him with a stern look, his laugh petering off. “Okay spill. Why do you dislike Dr. Lecter so much Malcolm? You said you were happy I have more friends now…”

“I am!” Malcolm said. Then he sighed. “There’s something off about him. You said he’s a blank slate and that’s the problem. He’s too blank. Too perfect. It’s like a façade.”

Will nodded slowly. “Maybe he is, but maybe that’s what I need right now. Someone too perfect to balance my too unstable-ness.”

“I know you like him Will. I know you probably want to be more than friends with him. Just promise me you’ll be careful if you get there. I worry about you.”

Will looked thoughtful. “I know, Malcolm, I know.”

*

It was almost a week later that Malcolm got the call. It was Gil. He answered immediately. “Hey kid. We have a situation. I thought you deserved to know; my team and I at major crimes, we think we’ve found a copycat of your father.” Malcolm felt his hand start to tremble again. “I just wanted to tell you before it’s all over the news.”

Malcolm forced himself to swallow down his unease. Forced himself to talk: “thanks Gil. For letting me know… I appreciate it.” Gil tried to ask how Malcolm was doing, but the conversation died off quickly, with Malcolm only replying with one word answers. Usually he would’ve just laughed it off, but the whole situation with Will had shaken him, and it wasn’t everyday he heard of someone copying his father’s kills. His family would be

dragged, unwillingly, back to the limelight, Malcolm knew. He couldn't hide from his past forever. He'd have to face it. And he wanted to do that on his own terms, which meant going to back to New York. Which meant he'd have to broach the topic to Will.

*

"You should go. Of course you have to go," Will said as soon as Malcolm had explained the situation to him. "Your family need you, and as much as you pretend otherwise, you need them too. Not your Dad though." Will added on quickly. "Don't give him any attention, he'll thrive on it and do whatever he can to mess with your head. Don't let him."

Malcolm nodded. "Of course," he said. Then: "Are you sure?" 'Are you sure you want me to leave you again?' Malcolm wanted to ask. 'Will we survive a second separation?' But as soon as he thought it he knew they would.

"Of course," Will said. "You would go stir crazy watching after me all the time. Besides," he added, suddenly looking at nothing in particular, "I have Dr. Lecter to look after me now." Malcolm took in a deep breath, then nodded. "You're leaving now because you have to." Will continued. "Not that I'm saying you didn't have to last time, but then we didn't talk about it. We're talking about it now and I'm saying go. We'll stay in touch." Will smiled softly, looking Malcolm directly in the eyes as he said: "I promise Malcolm."

Malcolm nodded.

And he went the next day.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

The epilogue where you finally get the endgame hannigram I promised

Chapter Notes

Sorry this is so late - I've had a few family emergencies which are making my life very hectic right now. Because of this the sequel will be posted chapter by chapter once a week rather than once every two days, just so I can manage it better. The sequel already has a lot of drama in it so if you're interested I suggest you subscribe to this series :) and thank you for reading!

It was Will's first therapy session since his recovery from encephalitis and he was nervously excited. He'd missed his and Dr. Lecter's conversations. He took his usual seat opposite Dr. Lecter and smiled.

"How are you feeling now that Malcolm has gone?"

Will chuckled. "He's only gone to New York. We call twice a week. He can afford it." 'So can I', Will didn't say.

"If I may ask, how did the two of you meet? Malcolm seems much more… extroverted than you are."

Will sighed. "Our mothers are involved in the same social circles. It was inevitable we'd meet really." He left it at that, not wanting to talk about the stuffy party they had first encountered each other at. The delight he'd felt at meeting someone with such sharp wit and clever observations. That was something he didn't want to share.

"I was under the impression that you lived with your father, that your mother was 'out of the picture', so to speak."

Will dragged his hand through his hair sheepishly. "I did, and she was. Until my father died. Then suddenly her reputation was under fire if she didn't take me in." His voice was cold. Not angry, detached.

"A strained relationship?" Dr. Lecter asked casually.

Will scoffed. “Strained is perhaps too light a word, Dr. Lecter. She avoided me as much as possible in our day to day lives. I obviously scared her. But when it was night time and she was under scrutiny at her parties she would show me off like a prized possession.”

“That must have been difficult.”

“Yeah.” Suddenly Will smiled. “But I met Malcolm because of her, and that made New York easier to deal with.” A pause. “Malcolm was my first friend.”

“He holds a special place in your heart then,” Dr. Lecter suggested. Then: “I hope you have more friends now.”

“You mean you?” Will asked.

“I mean Alana,” Dr. Lecter said. Will took in his open posture, his slight lean forwards, the glint of opportunity, of darkness in his eyes. Will wanted. Wanted like he had never wanted before. He swallowed thickly.

“I hope that’s because you want to be more, and not less,” Will said, proud that his voice sounded even.

“Would you be open to that?” Dr. Lecter asked.

“Yes,” Will breathed.

Dr. Lecter smiled, all teeth. “Then please, call me Hannibal.”

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